Tells the Facts and Names the Names

CounterPunch

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The Shalit Paradigm

Young Liars of the Right

Ruth Shalit glows in the knowledge that at the age of 25 she is the most successful of the young, conservative writers now patrolling the opinion pages or sporting their prejudices in the Sunday magazines. Shalit has a $45,000 contract with *GQ*, showed up in *The New York Times Magazine* with a cover story on Bob Dole, and recently gained pleasing notoriety with an attack in *The New Republic* (where she is an associate editor) on affirmative action at *The Washington Post*.

Shalit (pronounced "shall eat") has made all the proper moves along a path well trodden by careerists seeking fortune in right-wing journalism. First, attacks on "multiculturalism" or "PC" while at a college newspaper; next, arrival within the Beltway as an aide to a political figure or for one of the Right's think tanks; then on to work at a conservative publication.

This sort of career is distinguished by calculated forays into racism, in the manner of Dinesh D'Souza; boorishness, as with Emmett Tyrrell and P. J. O'Rourke; and a hostility to truth so blatant as often to amount to vulgar lying. Shalit embodies all of these unattractive traits. After patient scrutiny of her 13-page article on the *Post*, which created a great journalistic stir in Washington, we can report at least 50 mistakes, distortions and perversions of fact, an average of one per roughly 250 words. Incompetence and journalistic malfeasance on this scale would normally finish off a career.

Shalit's Oct. 2 story in *The New Republic*, "Race In The Newsroom: *The Washington Post* in black and white", claimed that the *Post*'s "determined diversity hiring" has produced a strong backlash, with both white and black reporters feeling "aggrieved and victimized by discrimination". According to Shalit, black staffers at the *Post*, apparently acting out of racial solidarity, have sought to cover up the failures of the city's political elite. Furthermore, the newspaper's once aggressive "coverage of the social pathologies at the heart of Washington's black underclass—chronic welfare dependence, adolescent childbearing, neighborhood crime and violence—has increasingly given way to puffery".

We've often criticized the *Post*, a newspaper which in recent years has carefully leached out any tincture of liberalism. But Shalit's piece wasn't about the *Post*. In the tradition of D'Souza and Charles Murray, it was an attack on African Americans, dressed up as social science.

Editors "will end up with a nearly all-white staff," Shalit wrote, "if they hire purely on the basis of qualifications. A "newspaper's mandate—to be an arbiter of truth, an enemy of euphemism, a check on social complacency—is directly at odds with the ideology of diversity management, with its ethos of sensitivity and conflict avoidance at all costs".

Yet despite attempts to diversify, the *Post* is still largely a white institution—minority journalists make up roughly 18 percent of its professional staff—in a city which is overwhelmingly black and minority. "Why shouldn't black people be encouraged to write about a black city and black government?" asks Jill Nelson, who chronicled her 1986 to 1990 tenure at the *Post* in *Volunteer Slavery*. "White men have traditionally held a privileged position in the world of journalism. When occasional attempts to level the playing field have been made, white men, and sometimes white women, have freaked out."

Shalit calls herself a "social liberal", and insists that she "tried to be scrupu-

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The Book On Numbers:

How The Park Police Count

Do the National Park Police deliberately undercount political protesters? In the aftermath of the October 16 Million Man March, that question rose again—as it has after virtually every major political demonstration held in the capital for the past thirty years.

When the Park Police announced that 400,000 people had attended the March, Louis Farrakhan, its chief organizer, declared that "racism" and "white supremacy" had prompted an underestimate. Farrakhan threatened to sue and the Park Police, who are charged by Congress with making the official crowd count for events held in the capital, agreed to allow Boston University's Center for Remote Sensing to do a computer recount using aerial photos of the march. The Center's tally of 837,000 was short of the Nation of Islam's figure of 1.2 million but more than double the Park Police's original estimate, making the Million Man March, officially, the biggest political rally ever held in Washington.

Up until about ten years ago, police employed the SWAG system—Scientific Wild-Assed Guess—to gauge crowd size. Now, police say they use a grid system to determine how many people can fit on a given area of land, then factor in crowd density, subway ridership and the number of cars and buses in city parking lots.

But of course politics condition the numbers. Before the Million Man March, the Park Police listed the 1969 Vietnam Moratorium Day protest as the biggest ever held in the capital, recording its size at 600,000 people. On the day of the event, police declared that only 250,000 people had attended.

Even that figure was too high for the Nixon administration. A month after the event, Defense Secretary Melvin Laird claimed that just 119,000 protesters had taken part, basing this estimate, he said, on an analysis of Air Force photos.

By April 23, 1971, the date of another gigantic anti-war rally—200,000 according to police, at least three times that amount according to the organizers—the official size of the Moratorium Day protest had mysteriously risen. A *New York Times* account of the 1971 event, citing police estimates, said that the crowd "did not approach in numbers the 320,000 who gathered around the Washington Monument in November, 1969". Dave Dellinger, a leader of the anti-war movement, tells us that police perennially under-counted protesters' numbers. "Of course, our side had a tendency to overestimate", Dellinger recalls, "but the police went far further in the other direction. We finally started hiring independent experts and found that our numbers were generally about twice the official count."

Some of the angriest arguments about crowd size have taken place during the past few years. In April of 1993, gay and lesbian rights activists announced a crowd of 1 million for a demonstration at the Mall. Police said that just 300,000 people had attended the event.

The police estimate was based on a series of aerial photos, the last one taken at 2:55 p.m. That was about 90 minutes before the crowd reached its peak and at a point when the Mall was still filling with protesters. Using aerial photos and other data, *The Washington Blade*, a gay weekly, determined that 750,000 people had participated in the rally—250,000 less than demonstrators claimed but 450,000 more than police claimed.

Torie Osborn, a long-time gay political activist and writer, served as liaison with Park Police at an earlier gay rights march, in October of 1987, with organizers estimating the crowd at 500,000. She was pleasantly surprised when the police officer she worked with told her that the official count was 375,000. "That was lower than our figure, but, given the usual discrepancies, I was relieved," Osborn recalls. The following day, though, she was amazed to read newspaper accounts of the march which referred to a Park Police estimate of just 200,000. That number became the official tally for the day's rally.

Another controversy arose in 1989, when an abortion-rights rally at the Washington Monument drew 300,000 according to the Park Police and twice that number according to organizers. The initial police count was less than 100,000, but organizers were able to negotiate a higher number because they had lined up a 6-member crew—including an engineer, a landscape architect and a mathematician —which challenged the official tally.

The clearest example of how politics can influence the police count came in April of 1992, during another abortion rights protest. Organizers claimed that 750,000 people rallied, while the Park Police settled on a figure of 500,000.

Two weeks later, after anti-abortion leader Rep. Christopher Smith of New Jersey demanded a recount, Park Police issued a new number: the crowd had been cut in half. "After completing [a recheck of bus and subway ridership and reviewing photos], the . . . estimate [of 250,000] was confirmed," Richard Powers of the Park Police wrote to Smith.

When the cause is non-controversial, the Park Police can be generous with numbers. According to police records, the most heavily attended event ever held in Washington was Lyndon Johnson's 1965 inauguration, which drew 1.2 million. However, people who attended the inauguration, as well as photos taken that day, suggest that the official number is grossly inflated.

The next three biggest events in the capital, according to Park Police, were 1 million at the July 4, 1976 Bicentennial celebration, and 800,000 each for Bill Clinton's 1993 inauguration and the June, 1991 Persian Gulf War homecoming. "They want to prove that patriotism draws more than protest, and that just isn't so," Osborn says. ■

Editors
KEN SILVERSTEIN
ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Production
TERRY ALLEN

Counselor
BEN SONNENBERG

Design
DEBORAH THOMAS

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CounterPunch
P.O. Box 18675
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202/986-3665 (phone/fax).

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Punch Bowl

The dream of a nation led by someone "above politics" is ever astir in American bosoms, particularly after contemplating the reality of men like Bob Dole, Bill Clinton or—God save us all—Phil Gramm of Texas, whose features eerily resemble a rat trap in mid snap.

If you go "above politics" all you find is more politics, as Colin Powell himself knew well enough, even though he publicly fantasized about a government of "experts" guiding the nation forward under sound, bureaucratic management.

Powell has all the political vices above which he supposedly soars, most notably a conveniently short memory and a talent for cover-up.

The antidote to this fantasy was readily available in the form of his 643-page autobiography. Anyone exploring those stolid pages could quickly enough perceive that Powell has all the political vices above which he supposedly soars: a conveniently short memory, a talent for cover-up, an ability to talk out of both sides of his mouth and a marked reluctance to say anything that might lose him readers, or votes.

Even his smooth withdrawal into non-candidacy showed Powell's political instincts in charmless outline, as he affirmed that welfare did indeed need to be "reformed" and that the budget must be balanced—the worn out mantras of reaction. *The New York Times* praised Powell for altering the terms of Republican politics by showing that a man could raise the flag of moderation within the party of Lincoln. Yet Powell raised this flag with the declaration that he was of the Rockefeller wing.

Nelson Rockefeller's name is virtually synonymous with the greatest single disaster in American life today, the "drug war", with its mandatory minimum sentencing, its role in the incarceration of upward of 800,000 African Americans at any given time and its creation of a vast American gulag.

Now the American people are in "recovery" as the saying goes, after Powell's exit (though the journalists who encouraged Powell to run and predicted he would do so—Sam Donaldson, Tim Russert, Charles Krauthammer, Evan Thomas, David Broder, among others—seem to be suffering the most). The uncomfortable return to earth has all the heavy resignation of a woman whose failed love affair leaves her once again sitting opposite the spouse in cardigan and slippers, drearily familiar in his usual chair.

The grieving mistress should realize that Bob Dole is merely Colin Powell at the level of political reality. Powell a war hero? Dole is more of one. Powell a man of the center, with extremist skeletons in his closet as a henchman of Reagan and Bush? Dole held the line for Nixon. Powell a versatile public speaker? Dole's wit is sharp. Sure, Dole is an opportunist and a coward. But with him we know where we are. Fantasy candidates lead to tears, and worse.

Those Oily Green Foundations

Our November 1 special issue on the Endangered Species Act and the role played by foundations elicited some droll reactions at Pew Charitable Trusts, which makes unconscionable amounts of money out of investments in rape-and-devour corporations. As clamor erupted from some of Pew's grantees at our revelations about the Trusts' holdings in Weyerhaeuser and oil company stocks, Pew executives responded that they had checked out *CounterPunch* and their intrepid research disclosed that . . . *CounterPunch* doesn't exist!

Pew then sent out Tom Wathen, director of its forestry and aquatic ecosystems program, to Eugene, Oregon, to meet with Tim Hermach of the Native Forest Council. Why, bellowed Wathen, was *CounterPunch* attacking Pew, when the Turner Foundation (another provider of environmental grants) got its endowment from the colorizing of black-and-white movies!

Did this match up to holdings in Monsanto and International Paper, ventured a Pew grantee who was also at the meeting? It's certainly a big deal to our friends in the arts community, snorted Wathen.

Pew is blundering on, undeterred by our disclosures. On November 10, Pew convened a meeting in Washington to display its blueprint for protection of the national forests from the Republican Congress. On hand was Phil Clapp, the Democratic Party hack now recruited to run Pew's Endangered Species campaign; David Fenton, publicist to the liberal gentry; and Bob Chlopak, another Democratic hack.

Chlopak boasted that he alone was responsible for nationalizing the ancient forest issue, that he orchestrated Clinton's April, 1993, timber summit in Portland and that he engineered Option 9, the cynical plan whose effect has been the destruction of the last of the ancient forests. So much for Pew's man, who gave as accurate a description of Pew's role as one could hope to find.

Trade Follows the Flag, or Is It The Other Way Around?

Corporate America has always chafed at the pretensions of US diplomats overseas, roosting in their splendid embassies, putting on airs and doing their best to avoid the coarse function which the Almighty set them on earth to perform: namely, to act as salesmen for American products. With the Cold War fading and the US foreign service eager to deflect congressional criticism that our tax dollars are being eaten up by embassy garden parties, the sales pitch is now stentorian.

Witness the devotion of the US foreign service to the cause of Enron, the Texas-based oil and gas giant, in the latter's bid for business in Mozambique. The saga was well described by John Fleming in *The Houston Chronicle* for November 1.

Enron—a client of Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin's during his days at Goldman, Sachs and a company which has received bucketsful of corporate welfare during the Clinton years—was chasing a $500 million deal to develop the Pande gas project and build a pipeline to South Africa. John Kachamila, Mozambique's minister of natural resources, described the heat that came down from the US embassy in Maputo: "There were outright threats to withhold development funds if we didn't sign, and sign soon. Their diplomats, especially Mike McKinley [deputy chief of the US embassy], pressured me to sign a deal that was not good for Mozambique. He was not a neutral diplomat. It was as if he was working for Enron. We got calls from American senators threatening us with

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this and that if we didn't sign. Anthony Lake [US national security advisor] even called to tell us to sign."

The striped pants crowd in the US embassy in Maputo threatened to cut $40 million in USAID assistance for development projects in Mozambique. "If the Mozambicans think they can kill this deal and we will keep dumping money into this place, they should think again," one State Department official snarled to the *Chronicle*. "We would be happy to go elsewhere." Kachamila ultimately agreed to

US embassy officials threatened to cut $40 million for development projects in Mozambique if the country didn't agree to a gas project with Texas-based Enron.

the deal, though he was able to obtain better terms for his country than those initially offered by Enron. Mozambicans no doubt remember vividly that in recent years another US agency, the CIA, was dumping money into the hands of Renamo, a terrorist force created by Washington and Johannesburg, designed to destroy the very economy that dribbles of USAID money now help to prop up.

Yes Darling, There Is A Free Lunch

"Free lunches" open excellent avenues to a newspaper reporter's undivided and loyal attention, according to Gary Putka, Boston bureau chief of *The Wall Street Journal*. Putka recently imparted this information to a bunch of Boston PR folk, as reported by *O'Dwyer's Washington Report*, a newsletter for the public relations industry.

"We're usually pretty good on accepting free lunches to get to know a business," Putka confided to the Boston flacks. He further excited his audience with the news that "a solid 50 percent" of the stories in the *Journal* stem from press releases.

Mexico's Junk Repayment

Mexico's economy continues to deteriorate, with the peso now trading at its lowest level since crisis erupted last December. The early-November news reports about the peso's new plunge must have come as a surprise to most people, since the Clinton administration and the press had been reporting that all was going well south of the border.

A news spasm last month had Mexico rebounding so strongly that it paid off $700 million in short-term loans to the US Treasury and Federal Reserve even before the money was due on October 31. This was trumpeted as proof that the Clinton administration's bail-out had been a superb move.

Not mentioned in such reports—carried by *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal* and other major newspapers—was that for the sake of political appearance, Mexico had taken out new loans in order to pay off its debt to the US. It was a check kiting operation.

The money due in October stemmed from $2 billion the US floated to Mexico last February. The loan was rolled over once in mid-year, with the proviso that Mexico would pay off the full amount this fall.

But as the maturity date neared, Mexico didn't have the necessary cash. The US Treasury (apparently with the aid of the IMF) rushed to the rescue. With its help, Mexico managed to borrow roughly $700 million from a consortium of German banks. However, to pay off the US loans, which carried interest rates of about 5 percent, Mexico borrowed from the German banks at 9 3/8 percent.

"It was an incredibly stupid loan from any capital structure perspective," Walker Todd, an attorney and former Fed official, tells us. Todd points out that Mexico's new loans carry interest rates nearly double those offered on German treasury notes with the equivalent 5-year maturity—terms normally forced on junk debt borrowers.

Flush with its new loan money, Mexico made good on $700 million due, but that still left it $1.3 billion short of the total owed Treasury for October 31. The US politely rolled that money over yet again, a move discreetly ignored in the press. ■

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(Shalit, continued from page 1)

lously fair" in preparing her story. "If any of the goals of affirmative action are to be preserved, affirmative action must be reformed. The only way to do that is to criticize its excesses," she wrote in a letter to *The New York Times* in which she defended her *Post* article.

Scrupulous fairness and candor are not conspicuous in Shalit's CV. At Princeton University, from which she graduated in 1992, Shalit served as editor-in-chief for the *Sentinel*, a *Dartmouth Review*-style publication that has been propped up with welfare checks from a variety of reactionary foundations, including the Madison Center, an outfit founded by William Bennett. The *Sentinel* was also the testing ground for Ramesh Ponnuru of the *National Review* and David Miller of *U.S. News & World Report*.

In her letter to the *Times*, Shalit distanced herself from D'Souza. But as editor of the *Sentinel*, she published at least one article by D'Souza (in which he attacked Rigoberta Menchu, the Guatemalan Indian who later won the Nobel Peace Prize), as well as a slavish review of his first book, *Illiberal Education*.

Shalit herself wrote essays—secured for us by our researcher at Princeton, John Garcia—attacking "hand wringing" multiculturalists, that favorite target of the campus Right. She also penned an odd article in which she argued that the War on Poverty had been "as clumsy, protracted

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and casualty-filled as Vietnam", though fortunately the national malaise resulting from the latter had been, as she put it, "buried . . . in the sands of Kuwait".

In 1992, Shalit worked for the Bush campaign, during which she became close to James Pinkerton, a big wallah on the Republican right and the man credited by *The Washington Times* with "putting the ['88 Bush] campaign on the trail of furloughed killer Willie Horton". (Al Gore, running in the Democratic primaries against Michael Dukakis, was the first to use Horton.) After Bush's defeat by Clinton, Shalit dropped out of politics and soon bobbed up as an intern at *The New Republic*, where she enjoyed the patronage of Fred Barnes, now an editor at Rupert Murdoch's *Weekly Standard*. A 1994 story in *Mediaweek* reported Shalit's zeal to "rise early on weekday mornings to accompany [Newt] Gingrich on his daily constitutional through the tree-lined avenues of his Capitol Hill neighborhood", and also that she had been the House Speaker's dancing partner at a black-tie event held by the Cato Institute in 1994 ("a cadre of young editorial writers from *The Wall Street Journal* looked on, waiting to cut in").

Shalit's attacks on African Americans have been unremitting. One of her earliest pieces at *The New Republic* was a hatchet job on Carol Moseley-Braun, the first and only black woman senator. In 1993, Shalit sped to Harvard after hearing a rumor that an article by a black law school professor had actually been written by his students. The story turned out to be false, but Shalit wrote an article anyway, under the pretense that the "pseudo-scandal" had "energized racial politics across the campus". She has also penned a foolish piece on the evils of diversity at the government level, in which she quoted neo-con Ben Wattenberg as saying that the Clinton administration was "turning into a walking billboard for a quota society".

Shalit makes so many mistakes that nothing that she writes can be trusted. Among the dozens of errors in her article on the *Post*: in what her target calls a "nice libel suit", Shalit erroneously wrote that Roy Littlejohn, a city contractor, once "served time" for corruption; she mistakenly claimed that Jeanne Fox-Alston, the *Post*'s director of hiring and recruiting, formerly worked as a copy editor (one of at least 5 errors by Shalit in reporting job titles and job descriptions). Fox-Alston was one of Shalit's prime targets because of her alleged role in "winnowing out white males"—that oppressed group which holds almost all of the top positions at the *Post*, and whose members have been selected for 123 of 330 newsroom positions over the past nine years. Shalit also falsely stated that the late Herb Denton was part of an equal employment opportunity suit filed against the *Post* in 1972, and charged that Graciela Sevilla, who worked at the *Post* between 1992 and 1995, quit "after less than a year".

In the tradition of Dinesh D'Souza and Charles Murray, Shalit's article was an attack on African Americans dressed up as social science.

Even physical descriptions are beyond Shalit's ability. Kevin Merida, a *Post* assistant managing editor, is 5'9, 175 pounds. Shalit described him as "lanky". Fox-Alston, said Shalit, wore her hair in a "gray topknot", though her hair isn't gray and Fox-Alston tells us that she has never worn it in a topknot.

More than a dozen of the *Post* staffers Shalit talked to say she misquoted them or manipulated their remarks. In Shalit's article, Merida complained that at the *Post*, minority reporters have a "general sense" that their value "is not completely taken into account", which Shalit calls the "classic plight of the affirmative action baby". But Merida says that his words were yanked out of context: "I wasn't whining; I have a great gig. I was talking about what black journalists feel in general. She used the quote as a prop to further her thesis."

Or consider the case of James Ragland, a black journalist described in Shalit's piece as having "quit [the *Post*] in frustration after the '94 mayoral campaign", and whom Shalit quoted as saying that stories "that should get in the paper without any trouble become much more difficult [because of race]. I understand the need to be sensitive, but it goes overboard."

Ragland, now at the *Dallas Morning News*, says he "specifically and directly" told Shalit that he did not quit in frustration but left because of a highly attractive offer from the *News*. "It was a very tough decision," he says about leaving the *Post*. Ragland says that at one point he was frustrated by editorial "heavyhandedness", but that a meeting was called after he had complained and problems had been resolved to his satisfaction. Ragland says that the quote Shalit attributed to him was not verbatim but patched together from different parts of the interview. He also says that in three-and-a-half years at the *Post* he never saw a story killed for reasons of race.

Ragland wrote a letter to *The New Republic* charging that Shalit had "fabricated" the quote. Shalit called Ragland before it was published, and, after much tearful pleading and apologizing, convinced him to strike the word "fabricated," and generally tone down his remarks. Then, in replying to his letter, Shalit wrote that Ragland "was quoted accurately and in context".

Nor was Shalit averse to outright lies. She claimed that Jill Nelson—supposedly "summering on the Vineyard"—wouldn't talk to her for the story. Nelson, now in New York and working on a second book, says that she spent the summer at her apartment in Harlem, and that Shalit never called her, though her number is listed with directory assistance.

Citing unnamed sources, Shalit claimed that Michael Getler, the *Post*'s deputy managing editor, was keen to hire Douglas Farah (now working as a correspondent from Central America) because he thought Farah was Latino. "Gee, Doug, everyone is just so excited at the prospect of hiring such a talented Hispanic reporter," Getler is said to have blurted out, only to be crushed when Farah replied, "I'm happy to be a Hispanic reporter if you'd like me to be, but I'm from Kansas."

Both Getler and Farah deny that such a meeting took place. Prior to publication, Shalit called Getler to ask about the meeting. He told her that he had no memory of it or of ever having said anything resembling what he was quoted as saying. He relented when Shalit told him that Farah was her source. But Shalit never talked to Farah, and the latter, in a letter which *The New Republic* refused to publish, wrote, "I could never have said I was from Kansas, as that is simply not true" (Farah was born in Massachusetts). Shalit claimed in her article that she had unsuccessfully tried to reach Farah, but he tells us that she never called him at the *Post*'s bureau in San

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Salvador and that "there was not a single fact about me [in her story] that was true".

At a substantive level, many of Shalit's charges were bizarre. The supposed mastermind behind the *Post*'s plot to cover up for black politicians is Milton Coleman, the *Post*'s metropolitan editor and a man best known to the public for having effectively killed Jesse Jackson's 1984 presidential campaign by publishing Jackson's comments about New York being "Hymietown."

Shalit charges that Coleman is "socially close" to Mayor Marion Barry and other black power brokers, which results in overly sympathetic coverage—a somewhat reckless allegation coming from Newt Gingrich's dancing partner. Of course, many D.C. journalists and publishers maintain indecently close ties with political leaders, starting with Shalit's boss, Martin Peretz, president of *The New Republic* and an intimate of Al Gore. The *Post*'s former executive editor, Ben Bradlee, was a great friend of President Kennedy, while Katharine Graham is close to Robert McNamara and Henry Kissinger, among many other establishment figures. In Shalit's view, though, it's only black journalists whose social ties distort news coverage.

Shalit is no doubt correct that the *Post*'s attempts to diversify have created a backlash among white reporters and editors. She adroitly got white staffers to make outrageous assertions, then presented these assertions as fact. She said that Merida had advanced from reporter to assistant managing editor "in one fell swoop" and quoted one person as saying, "Have you ever heard of that happening in the entire history of the news business?" At least six staffers at the *Post* alone have had virtually the identical career trajectory.

Another white staffer told Shalit, "Pick up the Sunday magazine these days. Every third issue, there's some black family on the cover, and then inside, a hacky sentimental story about what a wonderful, struggling black family this is." We picked up the past 60 issues of the magazine, from August of 1994 through October of 1995, and found a black family on the cover exactly once (Dec. 11, 1994, a portrait of an "egalitarian marriage"). During this period there were also cover stories on Colin Powell; Rosa Parks, Rita Dove, U.S. poet laureate; and a black drop-out who had learned to read.

Fox-Alston was attacked for "winnowing out white males" —that oppressed group which holds almost all top positions at the *Post*.

We also found cover stories about a white woman who adopted a black boy from Montserrat; problems at the NAACP; a black kid who'd served time in jail; and a story by Keith Richburg, a black American who covered Africa for the *Post* for many years. He gave thanks to God that his ancestors had come to America as slaves because otherwise he'd have been born in Africa, the site of "mindless waste of human life". This is not the record of a magazine shamelessly kowtowing to black sensitivities.

The New Republic printed only a few of the outraged letters it received from *Post* employees over the Shalit article. Among those it didn't print was this from Warren Brown, an automotive writer:

"Dear Ruth:

"Talk about lousy journalism! Your thinly disguised attack on affirmative action consumed 13 pages. If you had any guts, you could've done the job in one paragraph. To wit:

"'We don't want any blacks, yellows, reds. Not one is as well-qualified as a white, or white derivative, to give America the news. All of this diversity stuff is taking jobs away from deserving white folks.'

"Had you written that, you would've had my respect. Instead, you chose to hide your prejudice behind the veil of 'objective reporting'. . .

"You've obviously never read a 'pre-diversity' newspaper. I did. I grew up in segregated New Orleans reading the now defunct *New Orleans States-Item* and the still published *Times Picayune*. Even as a kid, I knew what was going on in those newspapers: Black criminals were clearly identified by race. If there was no racial identification, that meant the perpetrator of the crime was white. Black people never got married, according to those newspapers. But whites got married. You could tell, because their photos and names were in the papers' social writeups. Black people never did anything well, except maybe sing and dance. White people were pretty damned near perfect. But, I suppose you call that kind of journalism 'truth.'"

A final note: Shalit, who calls for candor and scrupulous fairness, runs away from discussion of her work. She refused to answer our questions about the *Post* article, saying she was "all talked out". ■

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